

(5) (3)

1 June 1954

The President  
The White House

My dear Mr. President:

*file*  
[REDACTED] an old friend of mine, also an old China hand, sent me a copy of a letter he had received from the [REDACTED]. I felt it was so interesting that I thought you might like to glance at it. It is important, I feel, to remember that the writer is giving his impressions of the city of Peking and is probably not in a position to describe the feelings or conditions of the millions of rural Chinese. I doubt whether here the percentage of "satisfied" would be anything like as high as the figure he gives.

Respectfully yours,

Allen W. Dulles  
Director

Encl.

AWD: [REDACTED]  
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Peking, April 22, 1954.

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I will take the opportunity to tell you a little about daily life here, as I know how glad you were for your stay in Peking at the time. By talking to older residents of Peking, (as for instance the worthy [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who all three are doing very well and who, I think, are the only Europeans left from your time) I have a strong impression that everything has changed. Life bears the stamp of an austerity that rests heavily on many. No theatres, no cinemas, no restaurants (the few in existence are sort of popular mass eatingplaces), no shopping around in antique shops, no contact with the Chinese except of a purely official nature. Everything is grey in grey. Not even radio or newspapers outside of the communist ones.

To a larger and larger extent the supplies have to be brought in from the outside. No veal or beef (only buffalo meat), only one kind of fish (the mandarin), rationing of rice, flour and vegetable oil. Only very poor connections with the outer world; airmail letters from [REDACTED] are often up to 6 weeks on the way.

But, fortunately, there are bright points. The climate is good. for 3 months we have had summer weather, not too hot, not too cool either, no wind and only two days where it drizzled. For the first time in many years I have escaped the flu, which otherwise I always get in January with annoying after-effects during the following months. The city is clean, the water can now be drunk without risk of infection; there are no mongrels in the streets, no beggars. One has to concede that the government has cleared up conditions.

Without going into political reflections I may say, that everybody - also people opposed to those in power - acknowledge that the great masses of the population (the 90%) are better off materially now than they were before. (But for the 10% it is dreadful no doubt). That there is a certain scarcity of supplies is - as the experts say - due to the fact that the purchasing power has grown considerably. All the Chinese (with the exception of the before mentioned 10%) seem to be satisfied. Everybody, even Mao Tse-tung, is dressed in a dreary and monotonous blue suit, the same for both sexes, and especially unbecoming to the women.

China is the only country where tips are refused. Bribery is also an unknown thing. Even small innocent gifts, formerly so well in place, like for instance a bottle of Cherry Heering, whisky or schnapps, are no longer even considered.

The foreign representations are a chapter by themselves. They fall into three groups:

1. The Embassies of the Eastern European States.

Large staffs, from 15-200 people. They isolate themselves socially from other representations.

2. The Embassies of the Asiatic Powers.

Chiefs of Mission the best informed.

3. The Representations of the Western Powers.

These can again be divided into two groups:

a) normal diplomatic representations:

Sweden	-	Embassy
Switzerland	)	
Finland	)	Legation
Denmark	)	

b) the so-called unofficial agents (without normal diplomatic prerogatives - with the exception of a very limited exemption from custom duties):

England, Holland and Norway

Their position is very difficult. The representative of the British world-empire is not received by Chen En-lai, he can only address the Ministry for Foreign Affairs through Verbal Notes.

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The Legation district is unchanged. The British compound is still an imposing collection of 26 separate houses. The small chapel is still being used for divine service. But the ministers have been deported, and the British agent who has the title of Minister, conducts the devotion of a very small congregation; as a rule we are only half a score of people present.

On my walks I often pass by your house. It is now the seat of some organization. One day I called up and asked for permission to see the house. It was suggested that I apply to Waichiaopu for permission.

Now I am afraid you are getting tired of all my Peking talk, so I will end,

with kindest regards,